

Marine Life Protection Act Implementation Update

Updated October 7, 2011

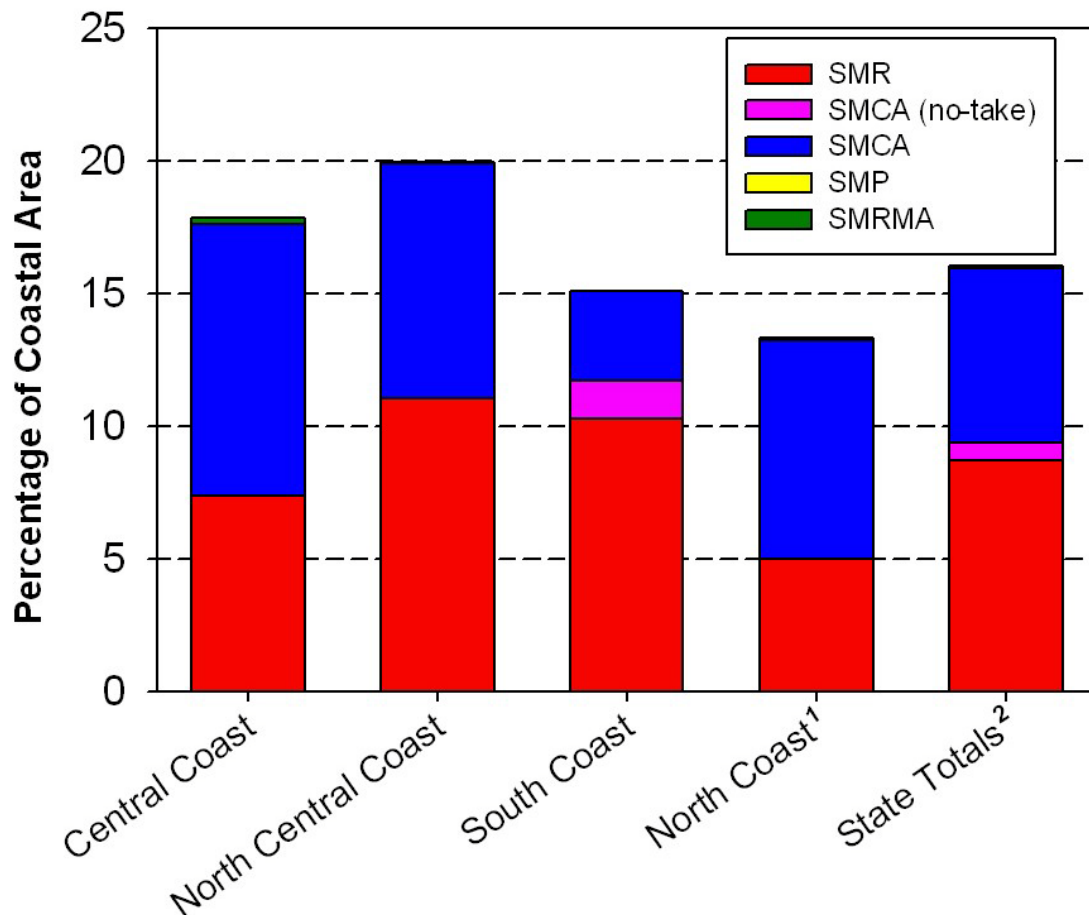
The Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA), passed by the California State Legislature in 1999, requires the California Department of Fish and Game to redesign its system of marine protected areas (MPAs) to increase its coherence and effectiveness at protecting the state's marine life, habitats, and ecosystem. Significant progress has been made towards the successful regional implementation of the MLPA and the development of a statewide network of MPAs. A Memorandum of Understanding established in 2004 created a public-private partnership commonly referred to as the MLPA Initiative, which split the state into five separate regional MPA planning processes. Four of five regional MPA planning processes have been completed thus far. Final proposed MPAs from three regional planning processes have been adopted by the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission), MPA regulations for two regions are currently in effect, and the third will go into effect on January 1, 2012. The fourth region is pending Commission adoption. Options for a planning process in the fifth and final region, the San Francisco Bay, are currently under development.

There are different classifications used in California's MPA network. This includes three MPA designations, a marine recreational management area, and special closures:

- State Marine Reserve (SMR): Prohibits all take and consumptive use (commercial and recreational, living or geologic). Scientific research, and non-consumptive uses are allowed.
- State Marine Park (SMP): Prohibits commercial take but may allow select recreational harvest to continue. Scientific research and non-consumptive uses are allowed.
- State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA): May allow select recreational and commercial harvest to continue. Scientific research and non-consumptive uses are allowed.
- State Marine Recreational Management Area (SMRMA): Provides subtidal protection equivalent to an MPA, while allowing legal waterfowl hunting. Scientific research and non-consumptive uses are allowed.
- Special closure: Geographically specific area that prohibits human entry. Special closures are generally smaller in size than MPAs and are designed to protect breeding seabird and marine mammal populations from human disturbance.

Summary statistics for MPAs in each of the four completed coastal regional MPA planning processes are provided below (Figure 1, Tables 1-5). All reported values are current as of October 7, 2011 and are subject to change.

Figure 1. Percentage of each of the four California coastal regions and statewide total in marine protected areas.



¹ Based on MPAs in the north coast preferred alternative, and may be subject to change depending on the final north coast MPAs that are adopted.

² State totals include all MPAs effective in the central coast and north central coast regions, all MPAs adopted in the south coast region, MPAs in the north coast preferred alternative, and do not include existing MPAs in the San Francisco Bay or special closures. Special closures were integrated into the MPA designation process and were used to provide further protections that would not otherwise be afforded by MPA designation within the same geographical location.

Central Coast Region: This region encompasses approximately 1,144 square miles (sq mi) of state waters from Pigeon Point (San Mateo County) south to Point Conception (Santa Barbara County). A network of 29 MPAs covering approximately 204 sq mi of state waters or about 18% of the central coast region has been in place since September 2007 (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary statistics for marine protected areas within state waters in the central coast region (implemented in 2007).

Type of MPA	Count	Area (sq mi) of MPAs in Central Coast State Waters	Percent of Central Coast State Waters
SMR	13	84.13	7.35%
SMCA	15	117.19	10.24%
SMP	0	0.00	0.00%
SMRMA	1	3.03	0.26%
Total	29	204.35	17.86%

North Central Coast Region: This region covers approximately 763 sq mi of state waters from Alder Creek near Point Arena (Mendocino County) south to Pigeon Point (San Mateo County). A network of 25 MPAs and seven special closures covering approximately 152 sq mi of state waters or about 20% of the north central coast region has been in effect since May 2010 (Table 2).

Table 2. Summary statistics for marine protected areas within state waters in the north central coast region (implemented in 2010).

Type of MPA	Count	Area (sq mi) of MPAs in Central Coast State Waters	Percent of Central Coast State Waters
SMR	10	84.09	11.03%
SMCA	12	67.56	8.86%
SMP	0	0.00	0.00%
SMRMA	3	0.59	0.08%
Special Closures	7	1.13	0.15%
Total¹	25	152.24	19.96%

¹ Totals do not include special closures.

South Coast Region: This region encompasses approximately 2,351 sq mi of state waters from Point Conception (Santa Barbara County) south to the California/Mexico border, including state waters around the Channel Islands. A network of 50 MPAs and 2 special closures (including those previously established at the northern Channel Islands) covering approximately 354 sq mi of state waters or about 15% of the south coast region is expected to go into effect on January 1, 2012 (Table 3).

Table 3. Summary statistics for marine protected areas within state waters in the south coast region (adopted in 2010).

Type of MPA	Count	Area (sq mi) of MPAs in South Coast State Waters	Percent of South Coast State Waters
SMR	19	241.50	10.27%
SMCA (no-take)	10	33.09	1.41%
SMCA	21	80.06	3.41%
SMP	0	0.00	0.00%
SMRMA	0	0.00	0.00%
Special Closures	2	1.76	0.08%
Total¹	50	354.65	15.09%

¹ Totals include the 13 northern Channel Islands MPAs (effective since 2003), and do not include special closures.

North Coast Region: This region covers approximately 1,027 sq mi of state waters from the California/Oregon border south to Alder Creek near Point Arena (Mendocino County). The public planning process in this region occurred between July 2009 and February 2011. The Commission adopted a preferred alternative MPA proposal for the regulatory process on June 29, 2011, with an expected adoption date of March 2012. The preferred alternative includes 20 MPAs and 7 proposed special closures covering approximately 137 sq mi of state waters or about 13% of the north coast region (Table 4). These reported values are pending final adoption of north coast MPAs by the Commission.

Table 4. Summary statistics for marine protected areas within state waters in the north coast region, pending final adoption.

Type of MPA	Count	Area (sq mi) of MPAs in North Coast State Waters	Percent of North Coast State Waters
SMR	6	51.17	4.98%
SMCA	13	84.94	7.97%
SMP	0	0.00	0.00%
SMRMA	1	0.79	0.08%
Special Closures	7	0.19	0.02%
Total¹	20	136.90	13.33%

¹ Totals do not include special closures.

Statewide totals: California encompasses a total of approximately 5,285 sq mi of coastal state waters (excluding state waters in San Francisco Bay which represent approximately 473 sq mi). The statewide coastal network of MPAs includes 124 MPAs and 16 special closures covering approximately 848 sq mi of state waters and representing approximately 16% of all coastal state waters (approximately 9% is in SMRs) (Table 5). Reported values include MPAs in the north coast preferred alternative, and may be subject to change depending on the final north coast MPAs that are adopted.

Table 5. Summary statistics for marine protected areas within the entire statewide coastal network.

Type of MPA	Count	Area (sq mi) of MPAs in All Coastal State Waters ¹	Percent of All Coastal State Waters ¹
SMR	48	460.89	8.72%
SMCA (no-take)	10	33.09	0.63%
SMCA	61	349.74	6.62%
SMP	0	0.00	0.00%
SMRMA	5	4.41	0.08%
Special Closures	16	3.08	0.06%
Total²	124	848.14	16.05%

¹ Excluding state waters in San Francisco Bay.

² Statewide totals include all MPAs effective in the central coast and north central coast regions, all MPAs adopted in the south coast region, MPAs proposed in the north coast preferred alternative, and do not include special closures or existing MPAs in the San Francisco Bay.